

Memoir on the Hodésun (improperly called *Kolehan*.)—By Lieut.

TICKELL.

(Continued from page 709.)

The Hos villages are in general unpicturesque, owing to their building on high barren spots, where the trees attain no size; they are very irregular, each house being separated and hedged in by itself, with its own little plot for planting maize, til, or tobacco; a street for sappers, generally runs through the village, and in the centre, an open space of turf, shaded by two or three tamarind trees, contains the slabs of stone under which the "rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep." On these stones the people assemble daily to talk or lounge, when there is no work to do in the fields. They scarcely ever build by rivers, preferring the vicinity of some small spring. The beautiful Byturnee, every wind of whose stream would be a subject for the artist's pencil, or the poet's pen, runs its crystal waters through regions of deserted forests, where the vastness of canopying trees, and the luxuriance of wild vegetation, show the richness of the soil; while four or five miles inland, the country is populous and well cultivated. I have never satisfactorily ascertained the reason of this bad taste; but among other causes, I have been told it was for fear of their little children tumbling into the water! Whatever it may be, the open, barren spots they select are more healthy than those selected for beauty would be.

A Hos if he be worth three or four ploughs, lives in a very comfortable manner. The houses of the Moondas and Mankees are substantial and capacious, built so as to enclose a square. The walls are of stout and well joined stockading work, covered with mud, and neatly "leaped" or plastered with cow-dung, or chalk and water. The principal building is commonly ornamented with a verandah (*Pindegee*,) supported on carved wooden pillars, and covered with an excellent thatched roof. It is divided into three compartments—a sleeping room, an eating room, and one for general stowage. Opposite this house, and about thirty paces off, is another of ruder construction, for servants, travellers, or guests, and the flanks are joined by "Byres," or cow-houses, a granary, and often a pig-stye. In the centre of the square generally stands a pigeon-house, built of logs, on high timbers, neatly thatched over. None of their villages are extensive, owing to the dislike they have to congregate together, for fear

of fire or contagious diseases ; so that the crest of almost every rising ground throughout the country, is occupied by a few scattered houses. The nomad tribes of Hos, who inhabit the hilly tracts, are obliged to move every third year, to make fresh clearings in the forest. The soil in these places is very rich for the first sowings, but not being manured, gets exhausted in three or four years.

The Hos wear very little clothing ; even the most opulent among them, who have quantities of cloth and ornaments, prefer keeping their finery shut up at home, for the purpose of adding to the pageantry of their funerals. Their raiment consists of a doputta, (which is gladly thrown off, unless on state occasions) and a neat narrow dhotee, called “Botoé.” They wear the hair oiled and combed backward, and fastened in a “toupee” behind, but unlike the Oráous and Moondas of Chota Nagpoor, adorn their heads with no ornaments. The men however are fond of earrings and small beads, or plaited necklaces and bracelets ; most of them also wear charms against snakes, tigers, or diseases, tied round their necks. These the Hindoos in the neighbourhood make a profitable trade of, in selling to them. The women of the lowest order go about in a disgusting state of nudity, wearing nothing but a miserably insufficient rag round the loins, at the same time their breasts and necks are loaded with immense bunches of bead necklaces, of which they are extravagantly fond. They perform the hardest duties in the fields, digging, shovelling, weeding, drawing water, and getting in wood from the jungles. Constant exposure and work renders them prematurely shrivelled and ugly ; the young women and girls of the better classes are however a striking exception. They are well, and at times handsomely dressed, with a tasteful proportion of ornaments, without the stupid shyness and false modesty thought proper among Hindoo women ; they are becoming and decorous in their manners, most pleasing in their looks, and doubly engaging from the frank and confiding simplicity which true innocence alone gives ; some few of them are very pretty, although more roughly cast than Hindoo girls. Their open, happy countenances, snowy white teeth, and robust, upright figures, remind one of Swiss peasant girls. Prostitution is quite unknown among them, and no more restraint is placed on females than in our own country.

The men are fine powerful fellows, and while young, very handsome. The early use of the bow expands the chest and sets the muscles while yet mere boys, and their passion for the chase, which they pursue over their steep and rugged hills, brings their lower limbs into a state of training which the best "Phulwan" of the plains of India might envy.

The Hos are keen sportsmen, a fact which the "Sahéb Lōg" at Chyebassa soon found to their cost; their Manton's and Purdey's, and Westley Richard's, might as well have been left unpurchased, for scarcely a living thing in the shape of game could show itself in the neighbourhood, without the country being up in pursuit. In the quail season, when the "d'han" is cut, every herdsman tending his cattle has his hawk on his fist, besides large parties of youngsters from the villages, who keep close ahead of the cattle, and the instant a quail or partridge rises, the nearest "Reechee" or "Chikra" cuts short his existence. I have frequently, returning home with an empty bag, met parties of them with provoking bunches of dead quail in their hands. On these occasions they would laugh heartily at the success of their system over mine, but generally end by offering me half of their spoils. My retaliation used to be in the snipe (khéts.) These birds, they confessed, their hawks could not overtake, and a successful right and left shot would restore the credit of the "Boondookoo."

From the burning of the grass till the new crop becomes too high, i. e., between January and June, they scour the jungles in large parties, and at uncertain periods, for wilder game, surrounding and driving to a centre the deer and other animals. But the grand meeting is in May, about the "Cheyt Purub," when people of all sects and classes repair to the hills north of Singbhoom. The preliminaries of the "Hankwa" are arranged by ambassadors and emissaries from Singbhoom, the Kolehan, and the Jungle Mehals, and vast multitudes draw in from every quarter, from Sikrbhoom, from near Bankoorah, and Medneepoor, on the east, and from the borders of Chota Nagpoor on the west. On the given day, these crowds, extended in lines, draw towards a common centre, sweeping the Jankeebooroo hills and other ranges which reach from Chota Nagpoor to the Soobernrekha river, separating Tamar from Singbhoom; as the lines approach each other, the slaughter commences. The uproar is difficult to describe, and the scene the wildest imagination can picture. Those deep

secluded vallies, those barely pervious dells, the huge solitary hills tops, buried in one vast sheet of pathless jungle, which except on this annual occasion are never visited by man, now swarm with countless hordes. In front of them the different animals pass and repass, bewildered by opposing hosts. The huge gowers rouse from their noon-day retreats, and stalk with stately steps along the hill side, till infuriated by the increasing din, they rush through the forest, heedless of rock or ravine, and rending the branches in their ponderous flight—the wild buffaloes thunder across, brandishing their immense horns, stamping and wheeling round their young ones ;—the neel gyes gallop past like a charge of cavalry. The stately saumer, the beautiful axis, the barking deer or muntjac, dash along, clearing the copse wood with flying bounds, and suddenly stopping with erect ears and recurved neck, as the tainted gale warns of danger a head. The fairy-like “Orey,” or small red deer, with noiseless feet comes skimming over the tangled underwood, skipping in wild starts to the right and left, and sorely bewildering a host of t’hakoors, rajás, and their body guard, who perched upon mechans, (scaffolds) in vain try to bring their lengthy matchlocks to bear ;—with snort and puff a ‘sounder’ of pigs scurry through. The redoubled uproar from without, draws the attention to something which has excited the beaters. The reeds and grass are seen to wave, as if some bulky form were sliding through them, and at length, loath to leave the haunts which had concealed him so long, out comes the tiger, with a lumping, stealthy trot, crouching to the earth, with ears quivering and turning to catch every sound. He has soon passed on into the leafy depths, from which his hollow growl may be occasionally heard. And last of all, as the peacocks begin to mount into the air, and the jungle fowl with noisy cackle take wing, a loud sonorous grunt or shout ushers in the sturdy old “Bhaloo,” who forced from the friendly shelter of rocks, comes bundling over the ground, and shaking his sides in a heavy gallop, oft stopping, wheeling round, and threatening his enemies. The reports of matchlocks ; the “click” of the arrows striking against trees ; the shouts of the multitude ; the roars, screams, and groans of the animals ; the piping of flutes ; the beating of drums ; the braying of trumpets, reach their climax, and the multitude, composed of all classes and sorts, meet near the raja’s mechan to compare notes of the

sport. Here are the ever-dancing and singing-Sontals, dressed out in flowers and feathers, with flutes ornamented with streamers made of pith ; the wild Kurrias, or hill men, from the Luckisinnee hills in Borahbhoom ; the Koormees, Taunties, Soondees, Gwallas, Bhoomijes, &c, with sonorus 'dammas' or kettle drums, and other uncouth music, armed with swords, bulwas, and bows and arrows of every description ; the Hos, simple and unpretending, but with the heaviest game bags ; the little ill-featured Tamarias, with spears, shields, and matchlocks ; the Nagpoor Moondas, with huge ornaments stuck through their ears, indifferently armed with bows and arrows, clubs, or bulwas ; the southern Koles, and the far comer from Sarnda with their chain earrings and monstrous pugrees ; the Bhooians with their long bows ornamented with horse tails, or the feathers of the blue jay, and their immense barbed arrows ; the Pykes of the rajas, koonwrs, thakoors and other zemindars with their shields, tulwars, powder-horns, and immense matchlocks with rests, dressed out in all colours ; lastly, the rajas, thakoors, &c. themselves, with guns of Delhi manufacture, prodigious scimetars, or an occasional "Angrezee bundook," the gift of some sahib long passed from the scene, seldom fired, but kept for show in a venerable clothing of rust. Mid great shouting and gabbling the parties claim and carry off their several heads of game, or wrangle for the arrows sticking in the carcasses and elsewhere about ; all then repair to the banks of the nearest stream, where they form their temporary camps ; fires are lighted, the game is cut up, bundles of provisions unpacked, and for a mile or upwards along the wooded vista, the clear bright water reflects innumerable groups, which on either bank are cooking, eating, drinking, sleeping, laughing, or dancing.

Such is the faint description of a scene in which I have often mingled, and look back to with much regret ;

" 'Tis merry, 'tis merry in good green wood,"

and the sports of these simple people in their sylvan retreats must afford the highest excitement and pleasure to all in whom to a passion for field sports is joined a love for the beauties of nature, here seen in her wildest and most striking attire.

These people have no amusements, with the exception of their hunting and fishing excursions, and the dancing and singing during

their festivals. The youngest boys stalk about birds nesting, armed with a small bow and arrow, or employ themselves fishing. Though cheerful, they are as manly as their fathers in appearance, and I have never seen them engaged in any game, nor am I aware that any are known by them. In Hindoo villages, groups of children may be seen constantly engaged in some puerile amusement, such as trap and ball, prisoner's bars, peg-top, mock processions, &c. ; and the older ones in fighting cocks, quail, or rams. But these appear to afford no pleasure to the Hos ; on calm summer evenings they are fond of assembling at their doors to listen to the flute, the girls sing in concert, the younger ones go through the quiet demure dance of the country, and papa and mamma sit aloof looking approvingly on, and solacing themselves with a little " Eely" ; while twilight lingers, their happy laughing voices, or the wild humming melody of their songs is heard ; but no squabbling, no abuse or high words, no " Gallee," none of the vile traits of common Hindoostanee life, ever offend the ear.

The language of their songs is poetical and pleasing ; it would not however bear translation. Ideas which in the English idiom would be dull and stupid, and words which would be common place, in the smooth mellifluous accents of their dialect sound interesting, and often beautiful. A few of their songs I have copied and translated at the end of the vocabulary, &c.

Their dances are almost similar to those of the Dhangurs, Santals, and other jungle people. The men and musicians are generally in the centre of a large circle composed of women, locked with their arms round each other ; the circle is headed by the eldest matrons, and brought up by the smallest girls, a space being left between, they *chassez* backwards and forwards, keeping exact time, and going slowly round the men in the centre. Sometimes another large circle of men forms outside them, but all step with the greatest exactness to the tune, and the effect is most singular and pleasing. The " Magh Purub" dance, when they go scampering through the villages four or six abreast, and in close column, is very like our " Gallope," and when the performers are well dressed, I have seldom seen any thing prettier.

Marriage Ceremonies.

When a young man has seen a girl who pleases him, he goes home and calls together four or six respectable men of his acquaintance,

to whom he communicates his wishes respecting her. They institute inquiries regarding the means, wealth, and respectability of the family, and if accounts are good, they set off to the girl's parents' house, taking a brass kutorah or a p'hool one a present, and tell the parents the young man's wishes. On their way to the house they note carefully all the signs that occur, as the flight of vultures, the song of the "ooi oe" or Mindanao thrush, and the appearance of jackals, taking care they should remain on the same hand they were met with. Should the conference terminate favourably, the deputation is feasted and kept one day at the house, and the signs they have noticed on the road are recounted and carefully expounded by men versed in augury. The next day the deputation returns again, noting the signs on the road; and in this manner they pass and repass between the houses of the parties, bearing messages and settling the marriage terms. These go-betweens are called "Dootáms." People also from the girl's side go to the bridegroom's, taking note in their journeys likewise of the signs on the road.

Should the omens be interpreted to be very bad, to portend death, or disease, &c., they determine to break off the match for a time, and appoint a meeting the next day, with "Eely" and fowls, to have a sacrifice on the road, half-way between the bride and bridegroom's houses. The next day they accordingly, to the number of four or six on each side, meet half way, and go through the sacrifice to the "Singbonga," after which they tear a saul leaf in two between them and declare the marriage null and void. The whole ceremony is concluded by a prayer to "Singbonga," begging that if the parties still wish to be united, he will vouchsafe to give them better omens the next time they negotiate.

After some time the Dootáms from the bridegroom go again to the bride's house, this time there is no notice taken of tokens; they give notice that the bridegroom with his father and mother are coming on a visit. A day or two afterwards, the young man with his parents set off, and are received at the bride's house, when mutual inquiries as to property, possessions, and the desire of the parties for wedlock, are again set on foot. All being satisfactorily answered, the parents settle the price to be paid by the bridegroom's father. This is generally twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty head of cattle, according to the old gentleman's means; sometimes, when the requisite number of cattle cannot

be paid, rupees, goats, sheep, or dhan, are given to make up the number. For every thirty head of cattle, one plough of bullocks and a buffalo, also a few brass pots, &c. are given over and above the bargain.

After this visit, people from the bride also go to see the bridegroom, along with the girl's parents, and a feast is given them, after which the cattle, and such other things as were agreed on are produced, and the parents of the bride settle the day they are to bring her to her husband.

On the day fixed, the bride is led to the bridegroom's house, in procession, with a numerous retinue playing on flutes and drums, and dancing; on approaching the bridegroom's house, he meets her in like fashion, and leads her towards his house. The bridegroom is mounted on a man's shoulders, with a drawn sword in his hand.

When the whole party have come in front of the bridegroom's house they halt, the bridegroom's mother, or aunt, or the nearest female relations bring a low wooden stool "Gandoo," on which they wash the bride's feet, and her party then retire with her to where they have taken up their quarters for the night. Provisions are then sent to the whole party, and to the bride a cock, on account of her being about to enter the house; this is called "Dooartañoom seem;" also "Chindee seem" or a fowl, for the bandage of her hair, which is to be untied and dishevelled the first night; also four pye of dhan, and a handia of Eely, called "Ajee hanar," which is for the bride's sister; also at midnight Eely, called "Talla needa eely" is sent to the party, and dancing and singing is kept up till morning.

The next morning the bride presents to the bridegroom for every head of cattle that has been given in price for her, a handia of eely, a pye of dhan, and a pye of rice; this is called "Doob gandoo eely, Baba, and Chowlee," being given because the bride is to be seated on a mora of dhan, (a seat is called Doob gandoo); of all this, one half is sent back by the bridegroom, also a goat called, "Jóm is sie merom;" also a rupee's worth of necklaces, "Jom issin hissir"; also one rupee of cloth for her mother, called "Enga bagé lijia". after feasting and drinking, the bride's party rise, and with singing and dancing bring her to the bridegroom's house and seat her on a mora of dhan, where oil is poured on her head, and a leaf dish

of boiled rice and meat, dressed in the bridegroom's house, called "Jom issin," is brought her, which she touches with her hand, and thereby declares herself of her husband's caste. She is then left in charge of the bridegroom's female relations, and the ceremonies end by all the parties dispersing home, and leaving the happy pair to themselves.

Signs and Omens.

If a vulture, crow, Mindanaó thrush, Indian magpie, oriole, woodpecker, partridge, jackal, fox, deer of kinds, hare, bee, snake, especially the Covra, pass behind the Dootám, or messenger, he will die.

If a Cadis, "toorpoo cheedoo," cross in front of the Dootám or messenger (negociator), it portends the death of the bride in childbirth.

Should an ichneumon fly, "koonkal ho," drag a large spider "bindee ram," across the road, it portends the bride will be carried off by a tiger the very first time she goes to fetch wood or water.

The same omen, if a hawk or kite of any kind stoop and carry off a bird, fowl, or lizard, from any side.

A syrus "hoor, or vulture, deedee" crossing the road flying singly in front, portends the death of the father or mother, according to the sex of the bird—of the bride if near her village, of the bridegroom if near his.

If the great wood-hawk, "booroo queed," hover over head, it foretells the death of mother and son at childbirth.

If the deputation meet a toad, "roto poto chokey," it portends that the bridegroom's father will be bewitched.

If a flying squirrel, "oral," call out on the right or left hand, before or behind, the marriage is stopped directly. The same if a parakeet, "meerov," (large ringed kind) scream.

Should a branch fall from a tree without apparent cause, such as being cut, or rotten, or worm-eaten, it portends the certain death of the parents of both parties.

If the tumble dung-beetle, "eeooroo," be met with rolling dung along, it threatens poverty and unrequited hard labour.

If two large lizards, "kaka," are met chasing each other to copulate, it is a sign that the bride's sister, or sisters, will commit some faux

pas. If a pair of little lizards, "reta kaka," do the same, it foretels intrigue among the bride's female servants.

If birds copulate, it portends that the intended bride is in love, or intriguing with some one else.

A jungul cat, "bow," crossing the road, signifies the bride will be a lazy good-for-nothing person.

In anointing the bride's head with oil, should a drop trickle down her nose, it is a good sign; should it go down her temple or cheek, it shows she will be inconstant.

If a Mindanao thrush, "ooi," Indian magpie, "hoorlee," or oriole, "bocho," perch on a kuhar tree, "doorlee daroo," in front or on either side, it portends the bride and bridegroom and their children will have ulcers. If they perch behind, the Dootám will have them.

If one of these birds are seen flying up and turn back, it threatens the bride's parents refusing to give her.

The voice or cry of the queen of the white ants, "boonoom enga," is a bad sign.*

If a number of "sarooses" or vultures, pass, it is a good sign.

If a magpie, woodpecker, vulture, Mindanao thrush, oriole, crow, or other bird settle on the summit of a large assun tree, "hatna daroo," it foretels riches.

If two dhamna snakes, "jamboo bing," cross, it also foretels wealth.

If the bee in wandering through the woods searching for honey settle upon a man, it foretels wealth, and that he will be very hospitable.

The same, and longevity, if a number of crow pheasants, "sengel topo," cross over.

A troop of hannooman monkeys, "sarra," crossing, promises great herds of cattle.

If any bird sit on a keond tree, "tirril daroo," it denotes the bride will be a vixen.

Meeting women, young or old, carrying water in ghurras, is a good sign.

If the spotted eagle, "doomoor kivid," settle on the right side, it bodes imprisonment to the traveller.

* This may allude to the low stridulous sound emitted from ant hills, during the sultry hours of noon, which ceases on near approach.

Rites, &c. at Childbirth.

When the pangs of childbirth are coming on, the husband procures some widow as midwife, to whom a fee of eight annas is given. During the wife's illness the husband alone cooks for her, and also for the midwife, who is unclean, as well as the husband; for eight days all the children and servants are excluded from the house, and sent with provisions to live for the time at some relation's; very little children are allowed to remain with the father.

Should the pangs be very violent, and the women's life in danger, divination is had recourse to, to discover the afflicting divinity, to whom a cock, goat, or sheep is sacrificed.

For eight days the husband cooks his own dinner, remaining apart from all friends and relations; during this time these latter prepare Eely, which they brew on the fourth day, so that it may be upon the eighth and place it in the husband's house. On the eighth morning the father shaves the child's head, and gets his own shorne by a taunty, or by his own servants. He then bathes and washes his clothes, and the wife does the same. They then go and partake of the Eely which has been set apart for them, and the relations finish the remainder, taking it away to drink.

The unclean state of the husband and wife still continues till the new moon, or the moon's first quarter, according to the time of the child's birth, and the expiration of the eight days. Finally, there is a grand feast at the house of the husband and wife, and they are held clean from that date.

Naming the Child.

When the child can begin to stand or waddle about, the parents think of naming him. For this purpose they procure a pan of water in which they put four grains of Oorid, then take them out, and rub them in the palms of their hands until they are well softened. The father then cries out a name, saying he will adopt it if the grain of Oorid floats in the water, but not if it sinks. Four names with the four seeds are thus tried, and the name to which the seed floats is assumed and given to the child.

Should all four seeds by any chance sink, the ceremony of naming is abandoned for six months, or a year, when the same operations are resumed.

It is common among the Koles for a friend of the family to wish to stand namesake to the child, but when this occurs, the grain of Oorid is still had recourse to, and if it sink at the godfather's name, he is rejected.

The namesake, or "sakee", binds himself to help the child in sickness, distress, or poverty; by sending goats, fowls, &c. to sacrifice in the former case, or by lending him rice, &c. to be repaid without interest in the latter, and this sponsorship ends in unbroken friendship between the two, throughout after life.

No kind of religion, or rites, or ceremonials are taught the children, but they pick them up as they can, by observing their elders. If a child die unnamed, it is not thought any particular misfortune on that score.*

Funeral Rites.

When a person is dead, the people of the house set up a howling, or "keening," which continues till the news has been given to all the relations, and the pile prepared, which it is in the yard of the house; first thick logs are placed, then smaller transverse faggots, on this a wide plank, along the edges of which sticks are laid; when this is prepared, the corpse is brought out foot foremost, bed and all, with all its ornaments on, male or female, by the women of the village and of the house.

It is then placed, amid crying and howling, on the pile, the head to the northward; rupees, to the amount that can be spared, are put into the mouth, a lota on each side the body, a brass, or "p'hool," kutora on the head, and one at the feet. Another board is then put on, and above it more wood, by the women, who amid redoubled lamentations, set fire to the pile.

When the whole is consumed it is suffered to remain all night, people going to and fro to watch it; next morning water is poured on the ashes through peepul branches, and women pick out all the half-consumed bones, which are dried, then sifted in a sieve, and then put into a ghurra and covered with leaves, after which it is hung up to the eaves at the back of the house. Eely is brewed on this day, and

* The youngest born male is heir to the father's property, on the plea of his being less able to help himself on the death of the parents than his elder brethren, who have had their father's assistance in settling themselves in the world, during his lifetime.

when it rises on the fourth day all assembled to bathe, wash their clothes, and shave, and then anoint themselves with the blood of a pig, after which they feast and drink up the Eely.

That same evening the ceremony is gone through of calling the spirit of the departed. All the company, except four people, the father, mother, and two women, or brother and sister and two women or men, sit outside in the back yard; some boiled rice and a pot of water is then placed within the inner room of the house, and ashes sprinkled from thence to the threshold; the father and mother, or brother and sister, as it may be, then go out, taking two ploughshares in their hands—the other two people are left in the house to watch. Those who have gone out proceed to the spot where the body was burnt, and where (in some parts of the country) a clay horse and rider, and an earthen pot on a tripod, with the mouth closed, are placed; round this spot the two relations walk, beating together the ploughshares, and calling out in a plaintive wild strain,

K'alleeng erankedmia	K'alleeng enkakedmia	Hoojorooramén
"We never scolded you,	never wronged you;	Come to us back;

Booqité 'leengposakeamia	assooladmia	Essoodinmidté leeng tykena
"We ever loved and cherished you,		and have lived long together

miadoaré leen tykena	na do alum bageea!	gama needa ko
"under the same roof;	desert it not now!	The rainy nights,

Rabang rabang poio dinko dâra	nendre do alum honorb'ya
"And the cold blowing days, are coming on;	do not wander here.

Atarked jang japarré alum tingoona	Hoojoo rooâmen
"Do not stand by the burnt ashes;	come to us again! You

Hesa soobaré umdo ka t'ya	gama hoojooredo
"cannot find shelter under the peepul,	when the rain comes

Rabang hoioré sarjum do Booqité ka doimiai
 "Down. The saul will not shield you from the cold bitter wind.

Oáté hoojoomén	Umnangenté oa do boogikidallé!	alleeng do
"Come to your home!	It is swept for you, and clean; and we	

Moonooité heating metanna, alleeng dóleeng minna, umnangente mandeeleeng
 "are there who loved you ever; and there is rice put for you;

doikia, dahleeng-doikia Hoojoomén oátéhoojoomén Doo'irimen alleeng tar!
 'And water; come home, come home, come to us again!

They then return to the house door, and call for a light, and commence searching for traces of the return of him they have been invoking ; they look in silence along the ashes for the supposed mark of the footstep of the spirit ; they examine the rice to see whether the grains have been disturbed—the water, to detect any drops thrown on the ground ; should any of these signs be discovered, it is announced that the spirit is come back to the house, and they sit down apart, shivering with horror, and crying bitterly, in which they are joined by all without, who come and weep long and loudly, and then depart.

The ceremony of going out and calling is persevered in till some signs, or fancied signs of the return of the departed to his home have been discovered.

The relations assemble once more to settle the terms and time of burying the bones. Rice is given to people to fetch a stone, as large as the means of the family admit of, which is to be put over the grave. Into the grave, which is two cubits broad and chest deep, and in the public burial place of the village, rice is put, on this the pot of bones, over this, rice, clothes, money, brass ornaments, and every thing they can afford.

The whole is then covered, and the stone or rock placed over it ; on this a goat is sacrificed, and the blood and heaps of salt sprinkled all over the stone, also oil is spread over the gravestones of all the dead relatives who are lying around, to awaken them to receive the new comer.

They also tie a strip of cloth to a branch of the tree above the gravestone, to show all passers by the quality of the cloth which was buried with the bones.

Besides the gravestone, another, a *cenotaph* stone, is buried upright to commemorate the name of the deceased, at the edge of the village, or side of the road, and the departed spirit is supposed to love to come and sit beneath its shade, when going to and from his house.

The Koles suppose the spirit to walk about in the day, and to keep in the house all night, for which purpose they preserve a little space clean for it, on which they place a small *mechan*, called “*Tantara*”, underneath which, in every *Pooja* or *Purub*, a small portion of the sacrifice is placed.

Kole History of the Creation of the World.

Their following idea of the creation of the world, and of castes, &c. was communicated to me by some of the Mankees orally, and copied almost verbatim. In the commencement, Ote' Boram and Sirma Thakoor, alias Sing Bonga, or God, were self-created. Sing Bonga is the sun. After them the moon was self-created.

Ote' Boram and Sirma Thakoor then made the earth; after that they clothed it with grass, trees, rocks, water; they then made cattle, which were first born in "Bogo Bochee;*" after them all wild animals. They then made a little boy and a little girl, at the bottom of an immense ravine, and as they had no houses to live in, the gods told them to inhabit a huge crab's cave (Katkomoá.) They grew adult, and Sing Bonga came to see them every day, and called them his grandchildren; but at length seeing no hopes of any progeny, from their extreme simplicity, he taught them the art of making "Eely," (rice beer) the use of which caused those sensations, which were in due time the means of peopling the world.

After the creation of man, Sing Bonga, or the sun, married Chandoo Omol, or the moon, from whence sprung four sons and numerous daughters. Now the four sons kept with their father, and the daughters lived with their mother, and as the sun rose every day, with his four hot, fiery sons in addition, the whole world began to burn; and all the animals and man perishing with heat, entreated the moon to save them; so the moon resolved within herself to destroy the sun's sons, and went, and accosting the father, said, "Our children do much harm to the world, and will soon destroy your labour. I am determined to eat mine; do you also devour yours." The sun promised he would follow the moon's example; and so when she hid all her daughters, and came and told him she had devoured them, he destroyed and eat all four of his children; after which the moon released her daughters from confinement. This artifice so enraged the sun, that he drew his sword and cut the moon in half, but repenting afterwards of his anger, allowed her to get whole in certain days, though she still remained condemned to be in half at others, and so she remained, and all her daughters with her, which are the stars.

* I could never learn what place this alludes to.

Now, some time after the first man and woman had lived together and known each other, Sing Bonga came down and asked them what progeny they had ; they say unto him, “ Grandfather, we have twelve sons and twelve daughters ; these twenty-four lifted up their voices and said, “ great grandfather, how can we brothers and sisters all live together ?—Sing Bonga said, “ Go you and make preparations and make a great feast, rice and buffaloe’s flesh, and bullock’s flesh, goats, sheep, pigs, and fowls of the air, and vegetables ;” and they did so ; and when the feast was prepared, Sing Bonga said, “ Take ye two by two, man and woman, that which shall please you most, and that shall ye have for share, to eat all the days of your life, apart from the rest, so that none shall touch his brother’s share.”

And so when the feast was prepared, the first pair and the second pair took buffaloe’s and bullock’s flesh, even as much as they could carry, and these became the Kole (Ho) and Bhoomij (Mootkan) race ; then a pair took the rice ; and other pairs, male and female, rice and vegetables, and these became Bramins, Rajpoots, Chuttries and other Hindoos ; and others took away the goat’s flesh and fish, and became other kinds of Hindoos ; the Bhooians took the shell fish, lastly, when nothing was left but the pig’s flesh, came two pair and took it away, and these are Sontals and Koormees to this day ; and when all the feast was cleared away, there remained one pair who had nothing, and to them the Koles gave of their share, and these are Ghassees to this hour.

And so all these went and lived separately, and peopled the world, and multiplied exceedingly, and Sing Bonga taught those who lived in far countries other languages, and he gave people of different trades their implements.

And after this from the Koles, from their senior house, sprung the English, who also eat of bullock’s flesh. But they are the senior children, and the Koles the junior !

And after the world was peopled, Sirma Thakoor destroyed it once, with the exception of sixteen people, because people became incestuous, and unmindful of God, or their superiors. (Some say he destroyed it with water, some say with fire.)

Wicked men are born again as dogs, pigs, or lizards. Those who swing at churruck poojas, become, some kites, others flying

foxes. Suttees never are born again, but remain burning for ever in their pits, and come out at night, wandering about, still burning (so say the Ghassees.) Good people after death are born again in some better condition in life than formerly. And this order of things will remain for ever and ever. There will be no last day.

When men die, their spirits go to the Sing Bonga, who asks them how they have lived, and judges them. The wicked he whips with thorny bushes, and sometimes buries them in great heaps of human ordure, and after a while sends them back to be born in this world as dogs, cats, bullocks, lizards, &c. The good man he sends back to be born a still greater and better man than he lived before, and all that he had given away in charity, Sing Bonga shows him heaped up in heaven, and restores it to him.

Gods and Spirits.

Besides Oté Boram and Sing Bonga, or Sirma Thakoor, there are Nagé Era or Garra Nagé, Desa Oolee, Marang Bonga—his wife is Pangoora ; these are village gods.

Chanala Desum Bonga, also his wife Pangoora, belonging to married women.

Horatén Ko, or road gods, who come along with a new wife ; also Mahlee Bonga, and Chandoo Omol.

Nagé Era, or Garra Nagé, or Chandore, is worshipped in springs, rivers, or wells ; she is supposed to preside over cutaneous diseases, and deafness ; she is propitiated with eggs and huldee ; if that do not do, with a pig. She has no father or mother, but was self-created. She is invoked to help in catching fish. *Desa Oolee* presides over diseases of the head and stomach ; he is the guardian of the village, and invoked to prevent infectious diseases coming into the country, also to insure rain, good crops, no diseases in the cattle. His wife is *Jaër Booree*. *Desa Oolee* is worshipped at the Mäg Purub ; they sacrifice goats, buffaloes, fowls. *Jaër Booree* is worshipped at Bah Purub, in March and April, and in Batta Oolee, in Assar. The same things are offered to her, except buffaloes ; and she presides over the same things. *Désa Oolee* lives in a grove made for him ; *Jaër Booree* in

another. They were from the first, as man and wife, but have no known progeny.

Marang Bonga presides over sickness, and is worshipped according to the extent of the sickness and means of the patient. He lives in a grove (small one) where they erect a post, after sacrificing a buffalo, and sticking its horns on the top.

To *Pangoora* they sacrifice, on account of sickness and fever, fowls, goats, or sheep; she lives under a tree, or two or three trees near an ant hill; no post is erected for her; she is the wife of *Marang Bonga*.

Chanala Desum Bongo is worshipped for diseases by married people alone, as he comes along with the bride from her village; *Pangoora*, his wife, is the same.

Horatén Ko are the spirits of the forefathers of a newly-married woman. They are worshipped on the road, and to them are sacrificed fowls, goats, or an old bullock; they are invoked for sickness.

Mahlee Bonga is invoked by cripples or blind people; he lives anywhere indiscriminately. They offer him pigs and fowls. *Chandoo Omol* is propitiated by a pig and a black fowl, for sickness: she lives wherever she was first worshipped.

None of these spirits have any reputed figure or description, and consequently are never represented by idols. The Hos frankly confess that as their gods, to their knowledge, have never been seen, they cannot be described; they also know nothing of the origin of them. They have, moreover, no notion of a devil or any evil spirit, their opinion being that he only who created, is able to destroy or torment either here or hereafter.

They have but four Purubs in the year, and these are not fixed to any particular date, some villages being two or three months performing their poojas, before or after others. *Mâg Purub* takes place about February and March, sometimes in January; *Bah Purub* follows a month after; *Batta Oolee* is in Assar; and there is also sacrificing and pooja gone through before eating the newly cut crops of the year, called the "*Namagom*."

These festivals consist in little more than singing, dancing, and immoderate drinking, besides offering up a goat or two, or a few fowls in each village. The people seldom adorn themselves, or make themselves cleaner than at other times, and the villages do not unite in

these merry makings, but go through their ceremonies at separate times, and at their own sacred groves.* At Mâg the men and women occasionally put on grotesque finery, and their songs and dances are wild and pretty. The figures and airs are nearly all alike; the women form a circle, are staid and demure, and sing in a low humming strain, while the men and drummers in the centre, in all stages of intoxication, twist themselves into all manner of contortions, and indulge in violent and ludicrous gestures. During one ceremony, at the Mâg Purub, the Koles abandon their usual decent behaviour to women, and both sexes go tramping through and about their villages, chanting the most odiously filthy recitative, in which the youngest who can lisp are allowed to join.

But if their public Purubs are few, they make up amply by the number of private sacrifices which they carry on in their own houses. On account of sickness in any member of the family, or among their servants, the most trifling indisposition, as well as the gravest malady, has but this one remedy among them. They never attempt resorting to medicine, and no frequency of deaths, no extent of the ravages of any contagious disease, can shake their faith in the one resource of offering sacrifices to the god who is supposed to be chastising them with the visitation. In endeavouring to dissuade them from this dangerous folly, in which the father of a family, with unshaken bigotry, sees his household swept away into the grave, and the whole of his live stock destroyed in vain efforts to check the ravages of sickness, by sacrificing to the gods, we have as yet signally failed; although they were, by dint of constant entreaty and admonition, induced to come to the Hospital at Chyebassa, and although many cures were performed upon them, it has proved of no eventual benefit; the Koles now never make their appearance to seek for medical aid, and the slight temporary reform that was effected among them, has altogether ceased.

The most gross superstitions still prevail among this people with regard to witchcraft; but the dreadful effects of this belief, to which numbers of unfortunate persons have fallen a sacrifice, have now, through fear of our laws, almost wholly ceased. The Koles believe

* These sacred groves, or plantations of saul trees, are attached to every village; they call them "Saër".

that by certain prayers and incantations, a person can obtain sufficient power to produce the illness, or cause the death, not only of any obnoxious person, but of whole families, or even villages; and that these evil arts can also extend to the crops, the cattle, and the weather!

Should any such misfortunes befall them, it is of course immediately referred to the machinations of some sorcerer, and every means is had recourse to, to discover him. This is effected either by certain signs, or by the divination of some augurer, or most frequently (in case of sickness) by the declaration of the patient himself, who declares he has seen the wizard in a dream, standing on him, and sacrificing to the gods, to procure his dissolution. Such is the inflexible integrity of the Koles in speaking truth, that I firmly believe the sick man, in all such cases, does dream of the person he denounces. Being taught from his infancy to attribute every misfortune to preternatural agency, it is not to be wondered at, that when in his turn afflicted, his apprehensions rest upon some one, with regard to whom a previous quarrel, or other cause of ill-will, suggests the fear of retaliation, and these thoughts, long nourished while waking, would naturally embody themselves in sleep in some dreadful dream, which at once substantiates all the suspicions of the sufferer!

Should these proofs however be wanting, the near relations of the patient have recourse, as I said, to a diviner. This class of wretches, sources of all evil, are not, happily, so prevalent among the Koles as the Hindoos who reside in the vicinity. To these the poor credulous creatures resort, journeying to great distances, and parting with almost all their possessions to obtain the aid of the sage, who, after collecting such information as he requires, pockets his fee, goes through some absurd ceremonies, and coolly denounces the person he may consider best suited for the distinction, as the originater of all the calamity.

The life of the unfortunate victim so pointed out was, of course formerly, not worth an hour's purchase; he was either slain openly by the party, whose kinsman was dead or dying, murdered in cold blood at night, or in some cases, demanded from his clans people, to undergo the ordeal. The latter have seldom been known to refuse such a requisition. The ordeal, however, was, as it has been in other countries,

merely a means of glossing over the proceedings. The person denounced had either to dip his hand into boiling ghee, or water, or stand upon a red hot Koolharee (shovel) when, if scalded or burnt, he was declared guilty, or he was tied up in a sack and thrown into the water, with the option of floating on the top, if he could.

The particulars of the ceremonies of divination and ordeal I cannot describe, having no longer the means of gaining information from the natives. Hitherto I have been writing from their dictation. The account of the creation, and of their marriages, and other rites, and their mythology, have been translated almost verbatim from their lips. Having now left them and their country, I conclude the theme from memory.

The Hos, although totally distinct from Hindoos yet, being a simple race have suffered that crafty people to lure them in many ways into following their ceremonies, rites, festivals, and prejudices. Those near the boundaries have become as subservient to Brahmins as any Hindoos would be ; but on this subject I shall speak hereafter. The “curse of caste” is strongly felt by them, and its follies strangely mixed up with the distinctions of relationship. They divide themselves into clans, called “Keelies,” of which there are a great number. Who the founders were, or whence they take their names, I never could ascertain. A man cannot marry into his keely, as it is looked upon as a kind of brotherhood ; neither can he eat with one of another keely. They have separated themselves entirely from the race from which they sprung, viz. the Mondas of Eastern Chootia Nagpoor, although Keelies of similar names are found in both. When the separation took place, it is impossible to say, but it has become marked not only in manners, dialect, and dress, but in appearance. The Mondas form part of the good tempered, but ugly figured *Dhangurs* seen in Calcutta. The Hos are, on the contrary, eminently handsome, with figures like the Apollo Belvidere. These last shave the hair off the forehead, and wear it tied behind. The Mondas wear their locks dishevelled, or clubbed at the top of the head, transfixed with a long pin or comb, and are at once distinguished.

The Hos are particular in their diet. They eat beef (all but the border and half Hindooised ones), mutton, goat's flesh, fowls, hares, deer, and fish. The poorest classes eat pig, but unlike the *Dhangurs*, San-

tals, Bhoomijes, and other tribes inhabiting the jungles, they never touch the flesh of bears, monkeys, snakes, and other wild animals. The Hos, with some few exceptions, will drink spirits (of which they are extravagantly fond) from wine glasses used by us ; but they will not drink water contained in any earthen vessel, which may have been touched by other classes. Many of them believe the essence or soul of a man to lie in his shadow, and consequently will relinquish boiling rice or other food, while preparing, if the shade of a different caste person fall upon it.

Their standard dish (as it is both meat and drink to them) is “ Eely,” or rice beer. It consists of rice and water boiled and mashed together, and then left to ferment for three days, with a piece of “ Rannoo” (a bitter root) to aid the process ; of this all classes, ages, and sexes, partake, many of them intemperately. In their hunting parties it often forms their sole sustenance for two or three days. The drink is not badly flavoured, and use would make it, I should think, just as palatable as our common small beer ; it causes moderate inebriation, and all classes appear after their meals slightly “ jollified” by it. They seldom drink to a disgusting excess, and quarrels from intoxication are not of common occurrence. The *Soondees*, a spirit manufacturing class of Hindoos, are numerous throughout Singbhoom, and make a strong distillation of the Mowhooa berry, called by the Hos “ arkee ;” of this the latter, left to themselves, do not much partake, preferring their own beer.

As yet, commerce has been scarcely at all introduced into the Kolehan ; the people, among whom poverty is unknown, remain contented with the spoils of the chase, and the limited produce of their fields, which are only cultivated in sufficiency to meet present want. They are bad husbandmen, and no agricultural works on a large scale, such as tanks and bunds to meet the exigencies of a dry season, are met with in the country. The “ levelling system” obtains so much among them, that there is no farmer or landholder in the country with capital sufficient to go through with such a work. The former lords of the soil, the “ Surawuks” (Hindoos), excavated many fine tanks, the traces of which still remain ; they have all however been destroyed by the Hos, who let out the water for the sake of sowing the rich mud at the bottom ; or have allowed them, through superstitious motives,

to fill up from neglect. Being an undulating country, their rice cultivation is restricted to nullahs and water-courses, over which they form fields, by choking up the stream with soil brought from the "Tarn," or upland, a process of infinite toil. An inferior kind of rice, "Gora dhan," is sown in the uplands, and the jungle tribes cultivate the hills up to their summits with cotton, moong, oorid, chunna, til, surgoojia, tobacco, &c. ; such common esculents as the jingee, khukra, cucumber, pumpkin, maize, and baugun, are grown in their villages ; also vast quantities of the castor oil tree, of the kut'hul, or 'jack', and mangoe trees, which the Surawuks planted in numbers, but few now remain. The Hos prize much more the tamarind, which is met with in every village, and grows in great luxuriance.

Vast quantities of the Tusser worm are reared in the "Assun" jungles throughout the country, the proprietors of which preserve them with great jealousy and care. The cocoons are sold to bead merchants, who come annually to barter them in return for necklaces. The silk is manufactured at Serykela, Bankoorah, and Medneepoor, that from the former being most prized. In tending the young worms, much the same ceremonies are gone through as by the people in the Sunderbunds ; fasting, continence, and cleanliness, being considered indispensable. The Hos travel all the way to Poory for the sake of purchasing salt ; they are allowed to bring it laden on bullocks through Kewnjur, by paying toll ; but in passing through Baumenghattee, a nearer and better road, salt on bullocks is seized and confiscated by the Mohenbunj Raja. Bangy loads are however suffered to pass on payment of some *douceur*. There is no Government gola nearer than Medneepoor or Bankoorah.

Vast numbers of cattle are bred in the country ; the Hos do not tend them themselves, but deliver them over to Gwallas, with whom they keep little account, until the cattle are required as payment on marriage occasions. The latter accordingly make a good thing of their charge, selling the milk and ghee, and often the cattle themselves. Great quantities of the latter, and also of buffaloes, are sold to Tamarias for the most trifling prices, besides numbers stolen or swindled away by their customers, who are notorious cheats and robbers. In former times, when the Hos used to make "Raids" over the borders, and harry the cattle of their neighbours, these little

filchings were not so much minded, but now that their excursions have been put a stop to, the owners get more careful, and keep a better look out on the Gwallas. The sheep also, which are numerous in some parts, have been pronounced by judges to be equal to the Patna mutton for the table ; but these and goats, as well as poultry, the Hos part with with difficulty, as they require them for their sacrifices, &c. A peculiarity in the country, is the immense flocks of pigeons, which breed in every village, and afford the poorest a delicacy at all seasons. With money the Hos are getting pretty well acquainted, but still hold copper coin in great disdain, seldom taking the trouble to count a large quantity, but reckoning it by handfuls, to the unfeigned astonishment of our Hindoo servants, who would squabble for the tenth part of a cowree.

In summing up this account of the Hos race by a description of their general character, their virtues and vices, I may perhaps fall into the error of a little partiality in their favour ; three years constant intercourse with them, in which their love of truth, their honesty, their obliging willingness, and their happy ingenuous disposition, formed so striking a contrast to the mass of the people in Hindustan, may perhaps have induced me to pass lightly over faults to which they are but too liable ; but this error (a pleasing one) is I imagine shared with me, by all the European residents who were at Chyebassa. Whether the duplicity and bad propensities of Hindoos in general, be owing to their intercourse with us, or whether it be inherent among them, is a point at present mooted, and not be decided by myself. But among this simple race, the reputed evils of civilization have not yet commenced to be felt ; and fervently is it to be trusted, though, alas, the hope may be Utopian, that the introduction of our Courts of Justice, in checking the lawless tendency of the Koles, may not destroy those virtues which are inherent to a primitive state of society. The unhappy feuds which, handed down through generations, formerly existed among them, were owing rather to mistaken notions of honour, than to more malignant feelings ; and the best proof of this, is the ease with which through a little timely advice, quarrels *a l'outrance* of the oldest standing have been made up, and whole clans readily reconciled to each other. After the first rough settlements of this country had been made, this became the

especial care of that truly wise and benevolent man, Major Wilkinson, the late Political Agent of the South-West Frontier,* and fortunate was it, that his excellent arrangements were so well seconded by the inherent good feelings of the people, for whose welfare they were directed. The depredations committed by the Hos formerly on their neighbours, for the sake of driving off their cattle, were chiefly, if not entirely, at the instigation of the Hindoo Zemindars around, who employed them to wreak their own malice on their neighbours, and indeed the Hos served them, in a manner, as mercenary hordes. Their forays were never marked by cruelty or unnecessary violence, nor except when they were openly resisted, was ever life taken. A fearful number of people (among themselves) have fallen sacrifices to the horrid superstitions respecting witchcraft; but such crimes, common to the barbarous ages of all nations, and but too prevalent formerly in our own, must be, by the impartial observer, attributed more to the depravity of the judgment than the heart. The superstition still continues, but the horrors resulting from it have almost entirely ceased. But cold blooded murder for the sake of gain, robbery, even pilfering, lying, deceit, dishonesty, even of the most venial kind, are almost unknown, and looked upon with disgust. The truth and integrity of a Kole are well known, and the fidelity of their wives, and modesty of the females in general, proverbial.

They are on the whole a light-hearted and good-natured race, irascible, though quickly appeased. But so strong is their sense of injury, that a harsh word suddenly spoken, will produce the most serious results; for this reason they seldom quarrel, and terms (epithets) of abuse are unknown in the language; among females the mere hearing of a few words of reproach will induce them to commit suicide, and this crime among both sexes is so frightfully prevalent, as to afford no parallel in any known country. The mere bantering a lad on his predilection for any girl, has led to self-destruction; jokes of an injurious nature they do not understand, and indeed seldom or ever indulge in them, although in the most harmless way. Beggars are scarcely known in the country, but the Hos are charitable to those deserving aid, and hospitable to strangers to the same de-

* Now Resident at the Court of the Raja of Nagpore (Berar.)

gree as Arabs of the desert, for it is thought a sign of enmity to stop even at the door-way without a 'stirrup cup' of Eely. Among their chief faults may be reckoned indolence, and dirt. The poorer people are often very filthy, and unless in the warm season, seldom touch water. The lowest classes will not object to devouring bullocks that have died, from disease, out in the fields, even though far advanced in decomposition, and will devour stale eggs, half-putrid fish, &c. &c. But these filthy customs are confined to the very lowest and poorest of the people.

Memoir of Sylhet, Kachar, and the adjacent Districts. By Captain FISHER, formerly Superintendent of Kachar and Jynta.

The provinces of Bengal east of the Brahmaputra, though among the earliest acquisitions of the British in India, attracted but little attention for a long time, in consequence of their general tranquillity and secluded position. The vast mountain regions by which they were encompassed on their external frontiers, seemed to secure them against the chance of serious foreign invasion, while the incursions of the wild hill tribes had but slight effects on their internal condition, and were easily curbed by a few local troops retained chiefly for that purpose. If Sylhet excited but little interest, still less was naturally thought of the petty independent states connected with it; and it was only after the Burmans had conquered Assam and Manipur, that a wish seems to have arisen for a more accurate knowledge of their condition; though this was still greatly restrained by fear of giving umbrage to their chiefs. The events arising out of the Burmese war have materially altered the relations of all these countries, on which, however, it is not my purpose here to enlarge, but simply to bring to notice such facts respecting their geography, internal condition, resources, and traditional history, as in the course of a long residence, and the prosecution of various inquiries, I have been able to collect; restricting myself however to the correction of current errors, and the notice of such particulars as have not hitherto obtained general publicity.

Geography.—The survey of Sylhet, though unfinished, has yet been prosecuted far enough to shew, that the area of the district is more